

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

No. 477.]

SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 1865.

[PRICE 2d.]

THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

SECOND PERIOD. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH. (1848—1849.)

THIRD NARRATIVE.

THE NARRATIVE OF FRANKLIN BLAKE.

CHAPTER V.

HAVING told me the name of Mr. Candy's assistant, Betteredge appeared to think that we had wasted enough of our time on an insignificant subject. He resumed the perusal of Rosanna Spearman's letter.

On my side, I sat at the window, waiting until he had done. Little by little, the impression produced on me by Ezra Jennings—it seemed perfectly unaccountable, in such a situation as mine, that any human being should have produced an impression on me at all!—faded from my mind. My thoughts flowed back into their former channel. Once more, I forced myself to look my own incredible position resolutely in the face. Once more, I reviewed in my own mind the course which I had at last summoned composure enough to plan out for the future.

To go back to London that day; to put the whole case before Mr. Bruff; and, last and most important, to obtain (no matter by what means or at what sacrifice) a personal interview with Rachel—this was my plan of action, so far as I was capable of forming it at the time. There was more than an hour still to spare before the train started. And there was the bare chance that Betteredge might discover something in the unread portion of Rosanna Spearman's letter, which it might be useful for me to know before I left the house in which the Diamond had been lost. For that chance I was now waiting.

The letter ended in these terms:

"You have no need to be angry, Mr. Franklin, even if I did feel some little triumph at knowing that I held all your prospects in life in my own hands. Anxieties and fears soon came back to me. With the view Sergeant Cuff took of the loss of the Diamond, he would be sure to end in examining our linen and our

dresses. There was no place in my room—there was no place in the house—which I could feel satisfied would be safe from him. How to hide the nightgown so that not even the Sergeant could find it? and how to do that without losing one moment of precious time?—these were not easy questions to answer. My uncertainties ended in my taking a way that may make you laugh. I undressed, and put the nightgown on me. You had worn it—and I had another little moment of pleasure in wearing it after you.

"The next news that reached us in the servants' hall showed that I had not made sure of the nightgown a moment too soon. Sergeant Cuff wanted to see the washing-book.

"I found it, and took it to him in my lady's sitting-room. The Sergeant and I had come across each other more than once in former days. I was certain he would know me again—and I was *not* certain of what he might do when he found me employed as servant in a house in which a valuable jewel had been lost. In this suspense, I felt it would be a relief to me to get the meeting between us over, and to know the worst of it at once.

"He looked at me as if I was a stranger, when I handed him the washing-book; and he was very specially polite in thanking me for bringing it. I thought those were both bad signs. There was no knowing what he might say of me behind my back; there was no knowing how soon I might not find myself taken in custody on suspicion, and searched. It was then time for your return from seeing Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite off by the railway; and I went to your favourite walk in the shrubbery, to try for another chance of speaking to you—the last chance, for all I knew to the contrary, that I might have.

"You never appeared; and, what was worse still, Mr. Betteredge and Sergeant Cuff passed by the place where I was hiding—and the Sergeant saw me.

"I had no choice, after that, but to return to my proper place and my proper work, before more disasters happened to me. Just as I was going to step across the path, you came back from the railway. You were making straight for the shrubbery, when you saw me—I am certain, sir, you saw me—and you turned away

as if I had got the plague, and went into the house.*

"I made the best of my way indoors again, returning by the servants' entrance. There was nobody in the laundry-room at that time; and I sat down there alone. I have told you already of the thoughts which the Shivering Sand put into my head. Those thoughts came back to me now. I wondered in myself which it would be hardest to do, if things went on in this way—to bear Mr. Franklin Blake's indifference to me, or to jump into the quicksand and end it for ever in that way?

"It's useless to ask me to account for my own conduct, at this time. I try—and I can't understand it myself.

"Why didn't I stop you, when you avoided me in that cruel manner? Why didn't I call out, 'Mr. Franklin, I have got something to say to you; it concerns yourself, and you must, and shall, hear it?' You were at my mercy—I had got the whip-hand of you, as they say. And better than that, I had the means (if I could only make you trust me) of being useful to you in the future. Of course, I never supposed that you—a gentleman—had stolen the Diamond for the mere pleasure of stealing it. No. Penelope had heard Miss Rachel, and I had heard Mr. Betteredge, talk about your extravagance and your debts. It was plain enough to me that you had taken the Diamond to sell it, or pledge it, and so to get the money of which you stood in need. Well! I could have told you of a man in London who would have advanced a good large sum on the jewel, and who would have asked no awkward questions about it either.

"Why didn't I speak to you! why didn't I speak to you!

"I wonder whether the risks and difficulties of keeping the nightgown were as much as I could manage, without having other risks and difficulties added to them? This might have been the case with some women—but how could it be the case with me? In the days when I was a thief, I had run fifty times greater risks, and found my way out of difficulties to which *this* difficulty was mere child's play. I had been apprenticed, as you may say, to frauds and deceptions—some of them on such a grand scale, and managed so cleverly, that they became famous, and appeared in the newspapers. Was such a little thing as the keeping of the nightgown likely to weigh on my spirits, and to set my heart staking within me, at the time when I ought to have spoken to you? What nonsense to ask the question! the thing couldn't be.

"Where is the use of my dwelling in this way on my own folly? The plain truth is plain

enough, surely? Behind your back, I loved you with all my heart and soul. Before your face—there's no denying it—I was frightened of you; frightened of making you angry with me; frightened of what you might say to me (though you *had* taken the Diamond) if I presumed to tell you that I had found it out. I had gone as near to it as I dared when I spoke to you in the library. You had not turned your back on me then. You had not started away from me as if I had got the plague. I tried to provoke myself into feeling angry with you, and to rouse up my courage in that way. No! I couldn't feel anything but the misery and the mortification of it. 'You're a plain girl; you have got a crooked shoulder; you're only a housemaid—what do you mean by attempting to speak to Me?' You never uttered a word of that, Mr. Franklin; but you said it all to me, nevertheless! Is such madness as this to be accounted for? No. There is nothing to be done but to confess it, and let it be.

"I ask your pardon, once more, for this wandering of my pen. There is no fear of its happening again. I am close at the end now.

"The first person who disturbed me by coming into the empty room was Penelope. She had found out my secret long since, and she had done her best to bring me to my senses—and done it kindly too.

"Ah!" she said, "I know why you're sitting here, and fretting, all by yourself. The best thing that can happen for your advantage, Rosanna, will be for Mr. Franklin's visit here to come to an end. It's my belief that he won't be long now before he leaves the house."

"In all my thoughts of you I had never thought of your going away. I couldn't speak to Penelope. I could only look at her.

"I've just left Miss Rachel," Penelope went on. "And a hard matter I have had of it to put up with her temper. She says the house is unbearable to her with the police in it; and she's determined to speak to my lady this evening, and to go to her Aunt Ablewhite to-morrow. If she does that, Mr. Franklin will be the next to find a reason for going away, you may depend on it!"

"I recovered the use of my tongue at that. 'Do you mean to say Mr. Franklin will go with her?' I asked.

"Only too gladly, if she would let him; but she won't. He has been made to feel her temper; he is in her black books too—and that after having done all he can to help her, poor fellow! No, no! If they don't make it up before to-morrow, you will see Miss Rachel go one way, and Mr. Franklin another. Where he may betake himself to I can't say. But he will never stay here, Rosanna, after Miss Rachel has left us."

"I managed to master the despair I felt at the prospect of your going away. To own the truth, I saw a little glimpse of hope for myself if there was really a serious disagreement between Miss Rachel and you. 'Do you know,' I asked, 'what the quarrel is between them?'

* NOTE; by Franklin Blake.—The writer is entirely mistaken, poor creature. I never noticed her. My intention was certainly to have taken a turn in the shrubbery. But, remembering at the same moment that my aunt might wish to see me, after my return from the railway, I altered my mind, and went into the house.

"'It's all on Miss Rachel's side,' Penelope said. 'And, for anything I know to the contrary, it's all Miss Rachel's temper, and nothing else. I am loath to distress you, Rosanna; but don't run away with the notion that Mr. Franklin is ever likely to quarrel with *her*. He's a great deal too fond of her for that!'

"She had only just spoken those cruel words when there came a call to us from Mr. Betteredge. All the indoor servants were to assemble in the hall. And then we were to go in, one by one, and be questioned in Mr. Betteredge's room by Sergeant Cuff.

"It came to my turn to go in, after her ladyship's maid and the upper housemaid had been questioned first. Sergeant Cuff's inquiries—though he wrapped them up very cunningly—soon showed me that those two women (the bitterest enemies I had in the house) had made their discoveries outside my door, on the Thursday afternoon, and again on the Thursday night. They had told the Sergeant enough to open his eyes to some part of the truth. He rightly believed me to have made a new nightgown secretly, but he wrongly believed the paint-stained nightgown to be mine. I felt satisfied of another thing, from what he said, which it puzzled me to understand. He suspected me, of course, of being concerned in the disappearance of the Diamond. But, at the same time, he let me see—purposely, as I thought—that he did not consider me as the person chiefly answerable for the loss of the jewel. He appeared to think that I had been acting under the direction of somebody else. Who that person might be, I couldn't guess then, and can't guess now.

"In this uncertainty, one thing was plain—that Sergeant Cuff was miles away from knowing the whole truth. You were safe as long as the nightgown was safe—and not a moment longer.

"I quite despair of making you understand the distress and terror which pressed upon me now. It was impossible for me to risk wearing your nightgown any longer. I might find myself taken off, at a moment's notice, to the police court at Frizinghall, to be charged on suspicion, and searched accordingly. While Sergeant Cuff still left me free, I had to choose—and that at once—between destroying the nightgown, or hiding it in some safe place, at some safe distance from the house.

"If I had only been a little less fond of you, I think I should have destroyed it. But, oh! how could I destroy the only thing I had which proved that I had saved you from discovery? If we did come to an explanation together, and if you suspected me of having some bad motive, and denied it all, how could I win upon you to trust me, unless I had the nightgown to produce? Was it wronging you to believe, as I did, and do still, that you might hesitate to let a poor girl like me be the sharer of your secret, and your accomplice in the theft which your money-troubles had tempted you to commit? Think of your cold behaviour to me,

sir, and you will hardly wonder at my unwillingness to destroy the only claim on your confidence and your gratitude which it was my fortune to possess.

"I determined to hide it; and the place I fixed on was the place I knew best—the Shivering Sand.

"As soon as the questioning was over, I made the first excuse that came into my head, and got leave to go out for a breath of fresh air. I went straight to Cobb's Hole, to Mr. Yolland's cottage. His wife and daughter were the best friends I had. Don't suppose I trusted them with your secret—I have trusted nobody. All I wanted was to write this letter to you, and to have a safe opportunity of taking the nightgown off me. Suspected as I was, I could do neither of those things, with any sort of security, up at the house.

"And now I have nearly got through my long letter, writing it alone in Lucy Yolland's bedroom. When it is done I shall go down-stairs with the nightgown rolled up, and hidden under my cloak. I shall find the means I want for keeping it safe and dry in its hiding-place, among the litter of old things in Mrs. Yolland's kitchen. And then I shall go to the Shivering Sand—don't be afraid of my letting my footmarks betray me!—and hide the nightgown down in the sand, where no living creature can find it without being first let into the secret by myself.

"And, when that is done, what then?

"Then, Mr. Franklin, I shall have two reasons for making another attempt to say the words to you which I have not said yet. If you leave the house, as Penelope believes you will leave it, and if I haven't spoken to you before that, I shall lose my opportunity for ever. That is one reason. Then, again, there is the comforting knowledge—if my speaking does make you angry—that I have got the nightgown ready to plead my cause for me as nothing else can. That is my other reason. If these two together don't harden my heart against the coldness which has hitherto frozen it up (I mean the coldness of your treatment of me), there will be the end of my efforts—and the end of my life.

"Yes. If I miss my next opportunity—if you are as cruel as ever, and if I feel it again as I have felt it already—good-bye to the world which has grudged me the happiness that it gives to others. Good-bye to life, which nothing but a little kindness from *you* can ever make pleasurable to me again. Don't blame yourself, sir, if it ends in this way. But try—do try—to feel some forgiving sorrow for me! I shall take care that you find out what I have done for you, when I am past telling you of it myself. Will you say something kind of me then—in the same gentle way that you have when you speak to Miss Rachel? If you do that, and if there are such things as ghosts, I believe my ghost will hear it, and tremble with the pleasure of it.

"It's time I left off. I am making myself

cry. How am I to see my way to the hiding-place if I let these useless tears come and blind me?

"Besides, why should I look at the gloomy side? Why not believe, while I can, that it will end well after all? I may find you in a good humour to-night—or, if not, I may succeed better to-morrow morning. I shan't improve my poor plain face by fretting—shall I? Who knows but I may have filled all these weary long pages of paper for nothing? They will go, for safety's sake (never mind now for what other reason) into the hiding-place, along with the nightgown. It has been hard, hard work writing my letter. Oh! if we only end in understanding each other, how I shall enjoy tearing it up!

"I beg to remain, sir, your true lover and humble servant,

"ROSANNA SPEARMAN."

The reading of the letter was completed by Betteredge in silence. After carefully putting it back in the envelope, he sat thinking, with his head bowed down, and his eyes on the ground.

"Betteredge," I said, "is there any hint to guide us at the end of the letter?"

He looked up slowly, with a heavy sigh.

"There is nothing to guide you, Mr. Franklin," he answered. "If you will take my advice, you will keep the letter in the cover till these present anxieties of yours have come to an end. It will sorely distress you, whenever you read it. Don't read it now."

I put the letter away in my pocket-book.

A glance back at the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of Betteredge's Narrative will show that there really was a reason for my thus sparing myself, at a time when my fortitude had been already cruelly tried. Twice over, the unhappy woman had made her last attempt to speak to me. And twice over, it had been my misfortune (God knows how innocently!) to repel the advances she had made to me. On the Friday night, as Betteredge truly describes it, she had found me alone at the billiard table. Her manner and her language had suggested to me—and would have suggested to any man, under the circumstances—that she was about to confess a guilty knowledge of the disappearance of the Diamond. For her own sake, I had purposely shown no special interest in what was coming; for her own sake, I had purposely looked at the billiard balls, instead of looking at her—and what had been the result? I had sent her away from me, wounded to the heart! On the Saturday again—on the day when she must have foreseen, after what Penelope had told her, that my departure was close at hand—the same fatality still pursued us. She had once more attempted to meet me in the shrubbery walk, and she had found me there in company with Betteredge and Sergeant Cuff. In her hearing, the Sergeant, with his own underhand object in view, had appealed to my interest in Rosanna Spearman. Again for the poor creature's own sake, I had met the police-

officer with a flat denial, and had declared—loudly declared, so that she might hear me too—that I felt "no interest whatever in Rosanna Spearman." At those words, solely designed to warn her against attempting to gain my private ear, she had turned away, and left the place: cautioned of her danger, as I then believed; self-doomed to destruction, as I know now. From that point, I have already traced the succession of events which led me to the astounding discovery at the quicksand. The retrospect is now complete. I may leave the miserable story of Rosanna Spearman—to which, even at this distance of time, I cannot revert without a pang of distress—to suggest for itself all that is here purposely left unsaid. I may pass from the suicide at the Shivering Sand, with its strange and terrible influence on my present position and my future prospects, to interests which concern the living people of this narrative, and to events which were already paving my way for the slow and toilsome journey from the darkness to the light.

CHAPTER VI.

I WALKED to the railway station accompanied, it is needless to say, by Gabriel Betteredge. I had the letter in my pocket, and the nightgown safely packed in a little bag—both to be submitted, before I slept that night, to the investigation of Mr. Bruff.

We left the house in silence. For the first time in my experience of him, I found old Betteredge in my company without a word to say to me. Having something to say on my side, I opened the conversation as soon as we were clear of the lodge gates.

"Before I go to London," I began, "I have two questions to ask you. They relate to myself, and I believe they will rather surprise you."

"If they will put that poor creature's letter out of my head, Mr. Franklin, they may do anything else they like with me. Please to begin surprising me, sir, as soon as you can."

"My first question, Betteredge, is this. Was I drunk on the night of Rachel's birthday?"

"You drunk!" exclaimed the old man. "Why it's the great defect of your character, Mr. Franklin, that you only drink with your dinner, and never touch a drop of liquor afterwards!"

"But the birthday was a special occasion. I might have abandoned my regular habits, on that night of all others."

Betteredge considered for a moment.

"You did go out of your habits, sir," he said. "And I'll tell you how. You looked wretchedly ill—and we persuaded you to have a drop of brandy and water to cheer you up a little."

"I am not used to brandy and water. It is quite possible——"

"Wait a bit, Mr. Franklin. I knew you were not used, too. I poured you out half a wine-glass-full of our fifty-year-old Cognac; and (more shame for me!) I drowned that noble

liquor in nigh on a tumbler-full of cold water. A child couldn't have got drunk on it—let alone a grown man!"

I knew I could depend on his memory, in a matter of this kind. It was plainly impossible that I could have been intoxicated. I passed on to the second question.

"Before I was sent abroad, Betteredge, you saw a great deal of me when I was a boy? Now tell me plainly, do you remember anything strange of me, after I had gone to bed at night? Did you ever discover me walking in my sleep?"

Betteredge stopped, looked at me for a moment, nodded his head, and walked on again.

"I see your drift now, Mr. Franklin!" he said. "You're trying to account for how you got the paint on your nightgown, without knowing it yourself. It won't do, sir. You're miles away still from getting at the truth. Walk in your sleep? You never did such a thing in your life!"

Here again, I felt that Betteredge must be right. Neither at home nor abroad had my life ever been of the solitary sort. If I had been a sleep-walker, there were hundreds on hundreds of people who must have discovered me, and who, in the interests of my own safety, would have warned me of the habit, and have taken precautions to restrain it.

Still, admitting all this, I clung—with an obstinacy which was surely natural and excusable, under the circumstances—to one or other of the only two explanations that I could see which accounted for the unendurable position in which I then stood. Observing that I was not yet satisfied, Betteredge shrewdly adverted to certain later events in the history of the Moonstone; and scattered both my theories to the winds at once and for ever.

"Let's try it another way, sir," he said. "Keep your own opinion, and see how far it will take you towards finding out the truth. If we are to believe the nightgown—which I don't, for one—you not only smeared off the paint from the door, without knowing it, but you also took the Diamond without knowing it. Is that right, so far?"

"Quite right. Go on."

"Very good, sir. We'll say you were drunk, or walking in your sleep, when you took the jewel. That accounts for the night and morning, after the birthday. But how does it account for what has happened since that time? The Diamond has been taken to London, since that time. The Diamond has been pledged to Mr. Luker, since that time. Did you do those two things, without knowing it, too? Were you drunk when I saw you off in the pony-chaise on that Saturday evening? And did you walk in your sleep to Mr. Luker's, when the train had brought you to your journey's end? Excuse me for saying it, Mr. Franklin, but this business has so upset you, that you're not fit yet to judge for yourself. The sooner you lay your head alongside of Mr.

Bruff's head, the sooner you will see your way out of the dead lock that has got you now."

We reached the station, with only a minute or two to spare.

I hurriedly gave Betteredge my address in London, so that he might write to me, if necessary; promising, on my side, to inform him of any news which I might have to communicate. This done, and just as I was bidding him farewell, I happened to glance towards the book-and-newspaper stall. There was Mr. Candy's remarkable-looking assistant again, speaking to the keeper of the stall! Our eyes met at the same moment. Ezra Jennings took off his hat to me. I returned the salute, and got into a carriage just as the train started. It was a relief to my mind, I suppose, to dwell on any subject which appeared to be, personally, of no sort of importance to me. At all events, I began the momentous journey back which was to take me to Mr. Bruff, wondering—absurdly enough, I admit—that I should have seen the man with the piebald hair twice in one day!

The hour at which I arrived in London precluded all hope of my finding Mr. Bruff at his place of business. I drove from the railway to his private residence at Hampstead, and disturbed the old lawyer dozing alone in his dining-room, with his favourite pug-dog on his lap, and his bottle of wine at his elbow.

I shall best describe the effect which my story produced on the mind of Mr. Bruff by relating his proceedings when he had heard it to the end. He ordered lights, and strong tea, to be taken into his study; and he sent a message to the ladies of his family, forbidding them to disturb us on any pretence whatever. These preliminaries disposed of, he first examined the nightgown, and then devoted himself to the reading of Rosanna Spearman's letter.

The reading completed, Mr. Bruff addressed me for the first time since we had been shut up together in the seclusion of his own room.

"Franklin Blake," said the old gentleman, "this is a very serious matter, in more respects than one. In my opinion, it concerns Rachel quite as nearly as it concerns you. Her extraordinary conduct is no mystery now. She believes you have stolen the Diamond."

I had shrunk from reasoning my own way fairly to that revolting conclusion. But it had forced itself on me nevertheless. My resolution to obtain a personal interview with Rachel, rested really and truly on the ground just stated by Mr. Bruff.

"The first step to take in this investigation," the lawyer proceeded, "is to appeal to Rachel. She has been silent all this time, from motives which I (who know her character) can readily understand. It is impossible, after what has happened, to submit to that silence any longer. She must be persuaded to tell us, or she must be forced to tell us, on what grounds she bases her belief that you took the Moonstone. The chances are, that the whole of this case, serious

as it seems now, will tumble to pieces, if we can only break through Rachel's inveterate reserve, and prevail upon her to speak out."

"That is a very comforting opinion for me," I said. "I own I should like to know—"

"You would like to know how I can justify it," interposed Mr. Bruff. "I can tell you in two minutes. Understand, in the first place, that I look at this matter from a lawyer's point of view. It's a question of evidence, with me. Very well. The evidence breaks down, at the outset, on one important point."

"On what point?"

"You shall hear. I admit that the mark of the name proves the nightgown to be your's. I admit that the mark of the paint proves the nightgown to have made the smear on Rachel's door. But what evidence is there, before you or before me, to prove that you are the person who wore the nightgown?"

The objection electrified me. It had never occurred to my mind until that moment.

"As to this," pursued the lawyer, taking up Rosanna Spearman's confession, "I can understand that the letter is a distressing one to you. I can understand that you may hesitate to analyse it from a purely impartial point of view. But I am not in your position. I can bring my professional experience to bear on this document, just as I should bring it to bear on any other. Without alluding to the woman's career as a thief, I will merely remark that her letter proves her to have been an adept at deception, on her own showing; and I argue from that, that I am justified in suspecting her of not having told the whole truth. I won't start any theory, at present, as to what she may or may not have done. I will only say that, if Rachel has suspected you on the evidence of the nightgown only, the chances are ninety-nine to a hundred that Rosanna Spearman was the person who showed it to her. In that case, there is the woman's letter, confessing that she was jealous of Rachel, confessing that she changed the roses, confessing that she saw a glimpse of hope for herself, in the prospect of a quarrel between Rachel and you. I don't stop to ask who took the Moonstone (as a means to her end, Rosanna Spearman would have taken fifty Moonstones)—I only say that the disappearance of the jewel gave this reclaimed thief who was in love with you, an opportunity of setting you and Rachel at variance for the rest of your lives. She had not decided on destroying herself, then, remember; and, having the opportunity, I distinctly assert that it was in her character, and in her position at the time, to take it. What do you say to that?"

"Some such suspicion," I answered, "crossed my own mind, as soon as I opened the letter."

"Exactly! And when you had read the letter, you pitied the poor creature, and couldn't find it in your heart to suspect her. Does you credit, my dear sir—does you credit?"

"But suppose it turns out that I did wear the nightgown? What then?"

"I don't see how that fact is to be proved,"

said Mr. Bruff. "But assuming the proof to be possible, the vindication of your innocence would be no easy matter. We won't go into that, now. Let us wait and see whether Rachel hasn't suspected you on the evidence of the nightgown only."

"Good God, how coolly you talk of Rachel suspecting me!" I broke out. "What right has she to suspect Me, on any evidence, of being a thief?"

"A very sensible question, my dear sir. Rather hotly put—but well worth considering for all that. What puzzles you, puzzles me too. Search your memory, and tell me this. Did anything happen while you were staying at the house—not, of course, to shake Rachel's belief in your honour—but, let us say, to shake her belief (no matter with how little reason) in your principles generally?"

I started, in ungovernable agitation, to my feet. The lawyer's question reminded me, for the first time since I had left England, that something *had* happened.

In the eighth chapter of Betteredge's Narrative, an allusion will be found to the arrival of a foreigner and a stranger at my aunt's house, who came to see me on business. The nature of his business was this.

I had been foolish enough (being, as usual, straightened for money at the time) to accept a loan from the keeper of a small restaurant in Paris, to whom I was well known as a customer. A time was settled between us for paying the money back; and when the time came, I found it (as thousands of other honest men have found it) impossible to keep my engagement. I sent the man a bill. My name was unfortunately too well known on such documents: he failed to negotiate it. His affairs had fallen into disorder, in the interval since I had borrowed of him; bankruptcy stared him in the face; and a relative of his, a French lawyer, came to England to find me, and to insist on the payment of my debt. He was a man of violent temper; and he took the wrong way with me. High words passed on both sides; and my aunt and Rachel were unfortunately in the next room, and heard us. Lady Verinder came in, and insisted on knowing what was the matter. The Frenchman produced his credentials, and declared me to be responsible for the ruin of a poor man, who had trusted in my honour. My aunt instantly paid him the money, and sent him off. She knew me better of course than to take the Frenchman's view of the transaction. But she was shocked at my carelessness, and justly angry with me for placing myself in a position, which, but for her interference, might have become a very disgraceful one. Either her mother told her, or Rachel heard what passed—I can't say which. She took her own romantic, high-flown view of the matter. I was "heartless"; I was "dishonourable"; I had "no principle"; there was "no knowing what I might do next"—in short, she said some of the severest things to me which I had ever heard from a young lady's lips. The breach between us lasted for the

whole of the next day. The day after, I succeeded in making my peace, and thought no more of it. Had Rachel reverted to this unlucky accident, at the critical moment when my place in her estimation was again, and far more seriously, assailed? Mr. Bruff, when I had mentioned the circumstances to him, answered that question at once in the affirmative.

"It would have its effect on her mind," he said gravely. "And I wish, for your sake, the thing had not happened. However, we have discovered that there *was* a predisposing influence against you—and there is one uncertainty cleared out of our way, at any rate. I see nothing more that we can do now. Our next step in this inquiry must be the step that takes us to Rachel."

He rose, and began walking thoughtfully up and down the room. Twice, I was on the point of telling him that I had determined on seeing Rachel personally; and twice, having regard to his age and his character, I hesitated to take him by surprise at an unfavourable moment.

"The grand difficulty is," he resumed, "how to make her show her whole mind in this matter, without reserve. Have you any suggestion to offer?"

"I have made up my mind, Mr. Bruff, to speak to Rachel myself."

"You!" He suddenly stopped in his walk, and looked at me as if he thought I had taken leave of my senses. "You, of all the people in the world!" He abruptly checked himself, and took another turn in the room. "Wait a little," he said. "In cases of this extraordinary kind, the rash way is sometimes the best way." He considered the question for a moment or two, under that new light, and ended boldly by a decision in my favour. "Nothing venture, nothing have," the old gentleman resumed. "You have a chance in your favour which I don't possess—and you shall be the first to try the experiment."

"A chance in my favour?" I repeated, in the greatest surprise.

Mr. Bruff's face softened, for the first time, into a smile.

"This is how it stands," he said. "I tell you fairly, I don't trust your discretion, and I don't trust your temper. But I do trust in Rachel's still preserving, in some remote little corner of her heart, a certain perverse weakness for *you*. Touch that—and trust to the consequences for the fullest disclosure that can flow from a woman's lips! The question is—how are you to see her?"

"She has been a guest of your's at this house," I answered. "May I venture to suggest—if nothing was said about me beforehand—that I might see her here?"

"Cool!" said Mr. Bruff. With that one word of comment on the reply that I had made to him, he took another turn up and down the room.

"In plain English," he said, "my house is to be turned into a trap to catch Rachel; with a

bait to tempt her, in the shape of an invitation from my wife and daughters. If you were anybody else but Franklin Blake, and if this matter was one atom less serious than it really is, I should refuse point-blank. As things are, I firmly believe Rachel will live to thank me for turning traitor to her in my old age. Consider me your accomplice. Rachel shall be asked to spend the day here; and you shall receive due notice of it."

"When? To-morrow?"

"To-morrow won't give us time enough to get her answer. Say the day after."

"How shall I hear from you?"

"Stay at home all the morning and expect me to call on you."

I thanked him for the inestimable assistance which he was rendering to me, with the gratitude which I really felt; and, declining a hospitable invitation to sleep that night at Hampstead, returned to my lodgings in London.

Of the day that followed, I have only to say that it was the longest day of my life. Innocent as I knew myself to be, certain as I was that the abominable imputation which rested on me must sooner or later be cleared off, there was nevertheless a sense of self-abasement in my mind which instinctively disinclined me to see any of my friends. We often hear (almost invariably, however, from superficial observers) that guilt can look like innocence. I believe it to be infinitely the truer axiom of the two that innocence can look like guilt. I caused myself to be denied, all day, to every visitor who called; and I only ventured out under cover of the night.

The next morning, Mr. Bruff surprised me at the breakfast table. He handed me a large key, and announced that he felt ashamed of himself for the first time in his life.

"Is she coming?"

"She is coming to-day, to lunch and spend the afternoon with my wife and my girls."

"Are Mrs. Bruff, and your daughters, in the secret?"

"Inevitably. But women, as you may have observed, have no principles. My family don't feel my pangs of conscience. The end being to bring you and Rachel together again, my wife and daughters pass over the means employed to gain it, as composedly as if they were Jesuits."

"I am infinitely obliged to them. What is this key?"

"The key of the gate in my back-garden wall. Be there at three this afternoon. Let yourself into the garden, and make your way in by the conservatory door. Cross the small drawing-room, and open the door in front of you which leads into the music-room. There, you will find Rachel—and find her, alone."

"How can I thank you!"

"I will tell you how. Don't blame *me* for what happens afterwards."

With those words, he went out.

I had many weary hours still to wait through. To while away the time, I looked at my letters. Among them was a letter from Betteredge.

I opened it eagerly. To my surprise and disappointment, it began with an apology warning me to expect no news of any importance. In the next sentence the everlasting Ezra Jennings appeared again! He had stopped Betteredge on the way out of the station, and had asked who I was. Informed on this point, he had mentioned having seen me to his master, Mr. Candy. Mr. Candy hearing of this, had himself driven over to Betteredge, to express his regret at our having missed each other. He had a reason for wishing particularly to speak to me; and when I was next in the neighbourhood of Frizinghall, he begged I would let him know. Apart from a few characteristic utterances of the Betteredge philosophy, this was the sum and substance of my correspondent's letter. The warm-hearted, faithful old man acknowledged that he had written "mainly for the pleasure of writing to me."

I crumpled up the letter in my pocket, and forgot it the moment after, in the all-absorbing interest of my coming interview with Rachel.

As the clock of Hampstead church struck three, I put Mr. Bruff's key into the lock of the door in the wall. When I first stepped into the garden, and while I was securing the door again on the inner side, I own to having felt a certain guilty doubtfulness about what might happen next. I looked furtively on either side of me, suspicious of the presence of some unexpected witness in some unknown corner of the garden. Nothing appeared, to justify my apprehensions. The walks were, one and all, solitudes; and the birds and the bees were the only witnesses.

I passed through the garden; entered the conservatory; and crossed the small drawing-room. As I laid my hand on the door opposite, I heard a few plaintive chords struck on the piano in the room within. She had often idled over the instrument in this way, when I was staying at her mother's house. I was obliged to wait a little, to steady myself. The past and present rose, side by side, at that supreme moment—and the contrast shook me.

After the lapse of a few moments, I roused my manhood, and opened the door.

CREATURES OF THE SEA.

THE Land World is wide, but the Ocean World is wider. To cut short all embarrassment of choice and the difficulty of knowing where to begin, suppose we take our familiar friend the oyster; first reproaching him with getting dearer and dearer every season. Time was—a very long while ago—when nobody would look at him, much less take him up and open him. Now, he is fought for by ungentle dames whose oyster-knives strike their rivals with terror, while epicures denominate the oyster the key to the paradise called appetite. But who first ate an oyster? The individual's name is not recorded, but tradition says that he did it not through hunger, but in consequence of acci-

dent. Being of an inquiring turn of mind, he poked his finger into a half-open oyster, which resented the intrusion with a nip. When *your* finger is hurt, you put it into your mouth; so did he. "Delicious!" he exclaimed, sucking his finger again. The idea flashed upon him that he had discovered a new delight, and oyster eating became henceforth an institution.

That event, however, must have occurred in a very remote and dim antiquity. Among the débris which precede the epoch of written history, oyster-shells are found. In the "midden heaps" of Northern Europe, they are mingled with other rubbish, and with stone implements, evidently the refuse of very ancient feasts. We have all read of Roman feasts which began, as now in Paris, with oysters brought from considerable distances. Oyster parks or ponds are of Roman origin. Vitellius ate oysters all day long. Seneca the wise could swallow his hundred, while Cicero the eloquent could take in his dozens. Louis the Eleventh annually gave the doctors of the Sorbonne an oyster treat. Napoleon the First ate oysters, when he could get them, on the eve of fighting an important battle. In short, we may hold it a gastronomic axiom that no feast is worthy of a connoisseur, in which oysters, during their season, do not come to the front; and fortunately no oysters are better than the English. On the oyster's anatomy we will not dwell, except to remark that, having no head, it can have no brain;—in spite of which, it has a beard.

From oysters we naturally proceed to pearls. Some few pearls, from their size and beauty, have become historical. A pearl from Panama, in shape like a pear and about the size of a pigeon's egg, presented in 1579 to Philip the Second of Spain, was valued at four thousand pounds. In 1605 a Madrid lady possessed an American pearl valued at thirty-one thousand ducats. Pope Leo the Tenth paid a Venetian jeweller, fourteen thousand pounds for a single pearl. He had never heard of the class of persons who and their money are soon parted. Another pearl was purchased at Califa by the traveller Tavernier, and is said to have been sold by him to the Shah of Persia for the enormous price of one hundred and eighty thousand pounds. If the saying be true, Tavernier was lucky in getting out of Persia with his head on his shoulders. A prince of Muscat possessed a pearl so valuable—not on account of its size, for it weighed only twelve carats, but because it was so clear and transparent that daylight was seen through it—that he refused four thousand pounds for it. Perhaps a better proof of its value would have been that he had taken four thousand pounds for it. The pearl in the crown of Rudolph the Second (it is said) was as large as a pear. Which pear? A jargonell, or a Duchesse d'Angoulême? And how big was the oyster from which it was taken? The Shah of Persia actually possesses a string of pearls, each individual of which is nearly the size of a hazel nut—an inestimable

string of jewels. Finally, at the Paris Exhibition of 1855, Queen Victoria displayed some magnificent pearls. On the same occasion, the Emperor of the French exhibited a collection of four hundred and eight pearls, each weighing over nine pennyweights, and all of perfect form and the finest water.

Pearls from mussels are less generally known—produced, however, not by marine, but by fresh-water species. For the best of these, we must go to Scotland. Linnæus, who was acquainted with the origin of pearls in general, was aware of the possibility of producing them artificially from various mollusks. He suggested the collection of a number of mussels, piercing holes in their shells with an augur to produce a wound, and afterwards “parking” them for five or six years to give the pearls time to form. The Swedish Government consented to try the experiment, and long did so secretly. Pearls were produced, but they were of no value, and the enterprise was abandoned as unsuccessful.

Scotch pearls were much celebrated in the middle ages. Between the years 1761 and 1784 pearls to the value of ten thousand pounds were sent to London from the rivers Tay and Isla; “and the trade hitherto carried on in the corresponding years of the present century,” says Mr. Bertram, “is more than double that amount. The pearl fisheries of Scotland,” he adds, “may become a source of wealth to the people living on the large rivers, if prudently conducted.” Mr. Unger, a dealer in gems in Edinburgh, having discerned the capabilities of the Scotch pearl, has established a scale of prices, which he gives according to their size and quality; and it is now a fact that the beautiful pink-hued pearls of our Scottish streams are admired beyond the orient pearl. Emperresses, queens, and royal and noble ladies, have made large purchases of these gems; and Mr. Unger estimates the sum paid to pearl-finders in the summer of 1864 at ten thousand pounds. The localities successfully fished have been the Forth, the Tay, the Spey, the Isla, and most of the Highland rivers of note.

Passing from the mussels to the pholades, we have a family who not merely bury themselves in sand, like cockles and razor-fish, but who are able in some mysterious way to excavate for themselves a dwelling in argillaceous rocks and even in harder stone. Our wonder is increased on finding their shell not stouter than paper. One species, indeed, is called *Pholas papyracea*. Besides this faculty of boring and burrowing, they possess another curious property—phosphorescence. The bodies of many mollusks shine in the dark, but none emit a more brilliant light than the pholades. Those who should eat them in the dark in an uncooked state—and they are well-flavoured and delicate—would seem to be swallowing phosphorus.

Most Italian tourists have beheld the evidence, furnished by pholades, of geological disturbance. On the shore of Pozzuolo, is a ruin called the Temple of Serapis, but probably

a thermal establishment for the use of its mineral waters. All that is now left, are three marble columns, each about forty feet high. These three columns, at about ten feet from their base, are riddled with holes, and full of cavities bored deep into the marble. The borings occupy a space of three feet on each column. There is no doubt about the cause of the perforations. In some of the cavities, the shell of the operator is still found, and naturalists seem agreed that it is a species of pholas.

To enable the stone-boring mollusks, which live only in the sea, to excavate this marble, the temple and its columns must have been sunk in sea water. Only under these conditions could the borers have worked upon the marble. But since the traces of perforation are now visible ten feet above the surface, it follows that, after being long immersed in water, the columns have been elevated to their present position. The temple has been raised again, carrying with it, engraved in marble, ineffaceable proofs of its immersion.

After the pholades, come the teredos or ship-worms—marine creatures with an irresistible propensity for perforating submerged wood. The galleries bored by these unsuspected miners, riddle the whole interior of a piece of wood; destroying it entirely, without any external indication of their ravages. By a strange kind of instinct, however multiplied may be their furrows or tubes in the same log of wood, they never mingle—there is never any communication between them. The wood is thus attacked at a thousand different points, until its entire substance is destroyed. Ships thus silently and secretly mined, have suddenly gone down with their crews, solely through the ravages of these relentless enemies.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, half the coast of Holland was threatened with destruction, because the piles which support its dikes and sea-walls were attacked by the teredo. Hundreds of thousands of pounds were expended in order to avert the danger. Fortunately a closer attention to the habits of the mollusk has brought a remedy against a formidable evil. The teredo has an invincible antipathy to rust, and timber impregnated with oxide of iron is safe from its ravages. The creature's aversion being known, all that is necessary, is, to sink the timber to be submerged, in a tank of prepared oxide of iron—to clothe it, in short, in a thick coating of iron rust. Ships' timber may be so protected; but the copper with which ships' bottoms are usually sheathed serves the same purpose even better.

Respecting the cephalopods (cuttle-fish, sepias, and other creatures with eight or ten arms round their heads), it is hard to say whether the facts concerning them, or the fictions, are the stranger. There exists a fearful fragment, a beak nearly two feet in length, which belonged to a great sucker or cuttle-fish. This monster, if the other parts of its body were large in proportion, must have been enormous, with arms

perhaps twenty or thirty feet long, studded with countless adhesive cups. And then, as Michelet says, there is the contradiction of a tyrant of the seas being soft and gelatinous. While making war on mollusks, he remains a mollusk also; that is to say, always an embryo. He presents the strange, almost ridiculous, appearance of a fœtus furious and semi-transparent, soft and insatiably cruel, taking life not for food alone, but for the mere pleasure of destroying.

Unless travellers' tales be "the thing which is not," colossal cuttle-fish still exist, encounters with which would rival Tartar-catching. Twenty years ago, some fishermen, near Nice, took an individual six feet long. Péron saw in the Australian seas, a cuttle-fish nearly eight feet long. M. Rung met, in the middle of the ocean, a short-armed cephalopod of a reddish colour, whose body was as big round as a tun. In 1853, a gigantic cephalopod was stranded on the coast of Jutland. Its body, which was dismembered by the fishermen, furnished many barrow loads.

The French steam corvette, *Alecton*, when between Tenerife and Madeira, fell in with a gigantic calamary, not less—according to the account—than fifty feet long, without reckoning its eight arms covered with suckers. At its largest part, it was some twenty feet in circumference; the tail end terminated in two fleshy lobes or fins of great size. The brick-red flesh was soft and glutinous, and its whole weight was estimated at four thousand pounds.

The commandant, wishing to secure this monster, actually engaged it in battle. Numerous shots were aimed at it, but the balls traversed its flaccid mass without causing any vital injury. After one of the volleys, the waves were observed to be covered with foam and blood; and the odour of musk, peculiar to many of the cephalopods, was strongly perceptible.

Musket-shots not producing the desired result, harpoons were employed; but they took no hold on the creature's soft and flabby flesh. Escaping from the harpoon it dived under the ship, and came up again on the other side. At last they succeeded in getting it to bite the harpoon, and in passing a rope round its lower extremity. But when they attempted to hoist it out of the water, the rope, penetrating deep into the flesh, cut it in two. The head with the arms and tentacles dropped into the sea and made off, while the fins and posterior parts were brought on board. These weighed about forty pounds.

The crew in their eagerness would have launched a boat in pursuit; the commander refused, fearing the animal might capsize it. It was hardly worth risking the lives of his men for the chance of catching a cuttle-fish, however phenomenal. It is probable that this colossal was sick or exhausted by a struggle with some other monster of the deep. Otherwise it would have been more active in its movements, besides darkening the waters with the

inky liquid which all the cephalopods have at command. Judging from its size, it would carry at least a barrel of this black liquid, if it had not been expended in some recent fray.

One of the most striking episodes in Victor Hugo's *Travailleurs de la Mer*, is the fisherman's battle with the pieuvre. The *Natural History and Fishery of the Sperm Whale* contains a like incident, but true.

Mr. Beale, while searching for shells at Bonin Island, was astonished to see an extraordinary looking animal crawling back towards the surf. Its eight legs, from their soft and flexible nature, bent considerably under the weight of its body, so that it was only just lifted above the rocks. It appeared much alarmed, and made every attempt to escape. Mr. Beale endeavoured to stop it by putting his foot on one of its tentacles, but it got away several times in spite of his efforts. He then laid hold of one of the tentacles with his hand and held it firmly; the limb appeared as if it would be torn asunder in the struggle. To settle the contest, he gave it a violent jerk. It resisted the pull; but the moment after, in a rage, it lifted a head with large projecting eyes, and loosing its hold of the rocks sprang upon Mr. Beale's naked arm, clinging to it with its suckers, while it endeavoured to get the beak (which he could now see), between the tentacles, in a position to bite him. Mr. Beale described its cold slimy grasp as extremely sickening. He called loudly to the captain, who was also searching for shells, to come to his assistance. He was released by killing the tormentor with a boat-knife, the arms being disengaged bit by bit. This cephalopod, of the species called rock-squid by whalers, must have measured about four feet across its expanded arms, while its body was not bigger than a large hand clenched.

The cuttle-fish can easily reply to Don Diego's question, "Roderick, hast thou a heart?" It has more than a heart, being furnished with three; the first two, placed at the end of the branchiæ; the third, on the medial line of the body. In another peculiarity the cuttle-fish surpasses man. Under the influence of strong emotion, the human face turns pale, or blushes; in some individuals it even becomes blue. The cuttle-fish does this, and more. Yielding to the impressions of the moment, it suddenly changes colour, passing through a variety of tints, and only resuming its familiar hue when the cause of the changes has disappeared. It is, in fact, gifted with great sensibility, which reacts immediately on its elastic tissues in a most extraordinary and unlooked-for way. Under the influence of passion man is born to blush; but under no sort of excitement does he cover himself with pustules. The cuttle-fish not only changes colour, but throws out an eruption of little warts. "Observe," says D'Orbigny, "a poulpe in a pool of water. As it walks round its retreat, it is smooth and very pale. Attempt to seize it, it quickly assumes a deeper tint, and its body

becomes covered on the instant with warts and hairs, which remain there until its confidence is entirely restored."

The Ocean World (which contains prettier portraits than those of calmars and cuttle-fish) has afforded us several agreeable and instructive hours. It is a book compiled to a large extent from *La Terre et les Mers* of M. Figuier, but the larger portion is a free translation of that author's latest work, *La Vie et les Mœurs des Animaux*. The seaside season is fast approaching, and we cordially welcome a new seaside book. Its value will be increased, in a second edition, by the correction of several obvious errata and mistranslations. The work (which is richly illustrated by four hundred and twenty-seven excellent engravings), together with a few others treating of similar subjects, will enable the holiday-maker to pass a rainy day at the seaside not only pleasantly but profitably.

GOODMAN MISERY.

PETER and Paul met in a village on a certain day, when the rain was falling in torrents. They were wet to the skin. They were both in quest of a lodging for the night, but could find none. A rich man—one Richard—had turned them from his gates, bidding them remember that his house was not a public wine-shop, when a poor woman, who was washing linen in a brook, took pity on them and led them to her neighbour, the Goodman Misery. How much more considerate was the poor washerwoman than Richard with his closed gates; for, having bethought herself on the way that old Misery would probably have naught wherewith to break the fast and slake the thirst of his guests, she provided herself with some cooked fish, a big loaf, and a pitcher of Susa wine. Peter and Paul ate with a will. The hungry man tastes the sweetest viands. But sad was the case when the meal was at an end. Goodman Misery was so poor he had no bed to offer them, save the straw upon which he usually rested his own aching limbs. The two travellers were, however, too considerate to accept it. They elected to sit up, and, by way of passing the time, suggested that Misery should tell his story to them. The Goodman consented, for it was a short and not a very eventful one. The most he had to tell, was, that a thief had stripped his pear-tree, the fruit of which was nearly all he had to depend upon for his wretched living. He would have gladly shared the fruit with them, had he not suffered this cruel robbery.

Touched by his distress, Peter and Paul told Goodman Misery that they would pray to Heaven for him. And one of them considerately added, if he, Goodman Misery, had any particular desire would he mention it?

The Goodman desired no more from the Lord than that any man who might climb his pear-tree should be fixed in it, and immovable, until

he, Goodman Misery, willed that he should descend from it.

On the very day which saw the retreating figures of Peter and Paul, while Misery was gone to fetch a pitcher of water, the same thief who had stolen his finest pears returned to the tree. Goodman Misery, having set down his pitcher, perceived the rascal immovable amid the branches.

"Rascal, I have got you, have I?" Misery shouted; and then, aside and in a low voice to himself: "Heaven! Who, then, were my guests last night? This time you will need to be in no hurry to pick my pears; but let me tell you that you will pay a heavy price for them in the torments you will have to endure at my hands. To begin with, all the town shall see you in your present plight. Then I will light a roaring fire under my tree, and smoke and dry you like a Mayence ham."

Goodman Misery having departed in quest of firewood to smoke and dry the thief like a Mayence ham, the culprit cried lustily until he attracted two of the Goodman's neighbours. Yielding to the prayers of the thief, these two honest folk climbed the tree to rescue their fellow-creature, whereupon they discovered that they too were fixed to the branches. The three had been left in company just seventeen hours and a half when Goodman Misery returned with a bag of bread and a goodly faggot upon his head. He was terrified to find three men settled in his pear-tree.

"Come, come," he cried; "the fair will be a good one with so many customers. And pray what did you two new-comers want here? Couldn't you ask me for a few pears, and not come in my absence to steal them?"

"We are no thieves," they replied. "We are charitable neighbours, who came to help a man whose lamentations smote us to the heart. When we want pears, we buy them in the market; there are plenty without yours."

"If what you say be true," said Misery, "you want nothing in my tree, and may come down as soon as you please; the punishment is for thieves only." Whereupon the two neighbours found themselves free, and quickly regained the ground; but the thief continued fixed to the branches in a pitiable condition after his long imprisonment; and the neighbours stood astonished at the power of the Goodman. They begged hard that Misery would take pity even on the thief, who had endured torture for many hours. The rascal prayed hard also, crying, "I'll pay any sum, but, in the name of God, let me come down. I am enduring tortures!"

At this word Misery permitted himself to be mollified. He told the thief, in releasing him, that he would forget his crime and forgive it. To show that he had a generous heart, and that self had never dictated any of the actions of his life, he would make him a present of the fruit he had stolen. He would be released from bondage in the tree, on the condition that he would take an oath never to climb it again,

and that he would never come within one hundred feet of it while the pears were ripe.

"May a hundred devils seize me," said the thief, "if I ever come within a league of it again while I live!"

"That is enough," said the Goodman. "Come down, neighbour; you are free, but never return, if you please."

The thief was so stiff and swollen in his limbs, that poor old Misery had to help him down with a ladder; for nothing would persuade the neighbours to approach the tree a second time. The adventure made a great noise in the neighbourhood, and thenceforth Misery's pears were respected scrupulously.

But Goodman Misery was old, and his strength was waning daily. He was content with the fruit of his pear-tree, but it was meagre fare that contented him. One day a knock was made at his door. He threw the door open and beheld a visitor whom he had long expected, but whom he did not imagine to be quite so near his poor hearth. It was Death, who, on his rounds, had stepped aside to tell him that his hour was near.

"Be welcome," said the Goodman, without flinching a muscle, and looking steadfastly at him as one who did not fear him. Misery had naught on his conscience, though he had lived with very little on his back. Death was surprised to find himself so well received.

"What!" cried Death. "Thou hast no fear of me! No fear of Death! at whose look the strongest tremble, from the shepherd to the king?"

"No, I have no dread of your presence," Misery said. "What pleasure have I in this life? If anything in this world could give me a regret, it would be that of parting from my pear-tree, which has fed me through so many years. But you must be settled with, and you brook no delays nor subterfuges when you beckon. All I will ask and beg you to grant me before I die, is, that I may eat one more of my pears in your presence. Afterwards I shall be ready."

"Thy wish is too modest a wish to be refused," said Death.

Misery crept froth into his yard, Death following closely on his heels. The Goodman shuffled many times round his beloved tree, seeking the finest pear. At length having selected a magnificent one, "There," he said, "I choose that one: I pray you lend me your scythe to cut it down."

"This instrument is never lent," quoth Death. "No good soldier permits himself to be disarmed. But it seems to me it would be better to pluck your pear with the hand. It would be bruised by a fall. Climb into the tree."

"A good idea," said Misery. "If I had the strength, I would climb; but don't you see I can hardly stand?"

"Well," Death answered, "I will afford this service. I will climb the tree myself."

Death climbed the pear-tree, and plucked

the fruit which Misery coveted so ardently; but was astonished when he found it impossible to regain the ground.

"Goodman Misery," said Death, "tell me what kind of a tree is this?"

"Cannot you see that it is a pear-tree?"

"Yes, yes; but how is it that I can move neither hand nor foot upon it?"

"I' faith that's your business," Goodman Misery answered.

"What, Goodman! You dare to play a trick upon me, at whose nod all the world trembles? Do you know the risks you are running?"

"I am very sorry," was Misery's cool answer.

"But what have you risked yourself in coming to disturb the peace of an unfortunate who never did you harm in his life. What fantastic notion led you to me? You have the time to reflect, however; and since I have you now under my thumb, I will do a little good to the poor world, that you have held in bondage for so many centuries. No! Without the help of a miracle, you will not get out of that tree, until I please to permit you."

Death, who had never found himself in such a plight, saw that he had to deal with some supernatural power.

"Goodman Misery," he pleaded, "I deserve this for having been too amiable towards you. But, don't abuse the power which the All Powerful has given you, for an instant, over me. Make no further opposition, I pray you, to the decrees of Heaven. Consent that I shall descend the tree at once, or I will blast it unto death."

"Blast it," Misery answered, "and I protest to you, by all that is most sacred in the world, dead as my tree may be, it will hold you until you get free from it by God's will."

"I perceive," Death went on, "that I entered an unfortunate house for myself to-day. But come, come, Goodman Misery. I have business in the four quarters of the world, and it must be all ended before sundown. Do you wish to arrest the course of nature? If I were to make my way out of this predicament, you might feel it sharply."

"Nay," said Misery, "I fear nothing. Every man who is above the fear of Death is beyond any threats. Your menaces have no effect on me. I am always ready to start for the next world when the Lord shall summon me."

"Very fine sentiments, Goodman Misery! Thou mayest boast, Goodman, of being the first in this life who has gotten the better of Death. Heaven commands me that with thy consent I leave thee, to return to thee only on the last day of judgment, when I shall have completed my great work, and man shall be no more. You shall see the end, I promise you; so now, without hesitation, allow me to come down, or let me fly away. A queen is waiting for me, five hundred leagues away."

"Ought I to believe you? Or is it only to betray me that you speak thus to me?"

"No, never shalt thou see me again until all nature is desolation. The last stroke of my

scythe shall fall upon thee. The edicts of Death are irrevocable. Dost thou hear me, Goodman?"

"Yea, I hear; and I believe in thy words. Come down when it shall please thee."

At this Death swept through the air, and disappeared from the sight of Misery. The Goodman has never heard of Death since, although he has often been told of his presence in his neighbourhood, almost next door; so that Misery has lived to a wonderful age, and still dwells in rags near his pear-tree. And, according to the solemn promise of Death, Misery lives till the world shall be no more.

Upon hawkers' shoulders for centuries past has this legend of the words of Scripture, that poverty shall never cease from out the land, been borne through the villages of France. A learned Frenchman surmises that the Goodman was a French child stolen away into Italy, there re-dressed, and thence escaped home into France. Goodman Misery, in any case, has had his chief travels in France. Millions of copies, describing his interviews with Peter and Paul, the thief, and Death, have been sold by hawkers among the road-side cabins of France.

YESTERDAY.

WHAT makes the king unhappy?

His queen is young and fair,

His children climb around him,

With waving yellow hair.

His realm is broad and peaceful,

He fears no foreign foe;

And health to his veins comes leaping

In all the winds that blow.

What makes the king unhappy?

Alas! a little thing,

That money cannot purchase,

Or fleets and armies bring.

And yesterday he had it,

With yesterday it went,

And yesterday it perished,

With all the king's content.

For this he sits lamenting,

And sighs, "alack! alack!

I'd give one half my kingdom,

Could yesterday come back!"

BOOKMAKING.

ANY person visiting the race-course at Newmarket, Epsom, Ascot, Liverpool, Chantilly, or any similar place in England or France, must of late years have observed a number of regular attendants upon these events, who are seen throughout the racing season, first at one town and then at another, wherever anything in the shape of steeplechase or flat race is to come off. There is an uniformity in the appearance of these individuals which distinguishes them from all other classes. Their hats are almost invariably new, and evidently bought at fashionable shops. They are, with scarcely an exception, clean shaved, or at most only wear a

thin mutton-chop whisker. Their garments are nearly new and, with the exception of a somewhat profuse quantity of watch-chain knick-knacks, they wear no more jewellery than well-dressed men should. When they meet on the platform at a railway, they always surname each other in the most cordial manner. "How are you, Jones?" "Fine day, Robinson," "Glad to see you, Brown." It is clear at a glance that these persons, though they appear to have abundant leisure, have their minds preoccupied by business. These persons are "bookmakers." Their trade is to attend every race of importance run in this country, in France, and even some few in Germany, and to make money by betting—by "bookmaking"—not upon the way in which one horse beats the speed or the stamina of another horse, but by careful calculations, and making the result of betting upon one event cover that of another: to turn their money, and make an uncommon good thing out of what to the world outside the betting world, is almost invariably a snare and a loss.

There was a time when betting upon racing was confined to those who really took an interest in, or, had some knowledge of, horses. But times have changed. The peer bets his hundreds, the stock-broker his tens, the costermonger his half-crowns. They cannot all bet one with another, for they have other occupations, and their time would be inconveniently consumed in seeking for persons to take or lay them the odds, and who would be good for payment should they lose. The consequence has been that the demand for betting agents has created the supply, and, excepting a few turf magnates who know each other well, everybody who in these days wishes to bet, looks out for a "bookmaker."

As in every other profession, there are good and bad men among the bookmakers; there are honest men who make a living by honest means and fair dealing, and there are men who will take all money paid them, but who make themselves conspicuous by their absence when called upon to pay what they have lost. To the honour of the new calling, the former class predominate greatly, and if any person wishing to bet finds himself in the hands of a "welcher"—the name given to scamps who take everything and pay nothing—it must be his own fault.

The respectable bookmaker is generally—almost invariably—a self-made man. One of them, a man who could write a cheque (and, what is more, have it cashed) for fifty thousand pounds, was once a waiter in a well-known West-end hotel famous some ten or a dozen years ago as the resort of military men given to betting, and for the sanded floor of its coffee-room. Another, whose word is good any day among turf men for twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds, was, about half a dozen years back, butler and valet to a well-known sporting nobleman. A third, once kept a small grocer's shop in a country town in the

north of England. A fourth was a journeyman printer. A fifth used to drive a hansom cab. All these men began with small beginnings, and rose upon their capacity for, and knowledge of, figures. The writer is no advocate of betting. If any one asked his advice how to lay out his money on a horse-race, he would recommend his client to leave the thing alone. In fact, the very winnings of the new calling are of themselves proofs enough that, as a rule, the public must lose its money, and the bookmakers must win.

But how is it that this new calling makes its money—what is the mode of procedure?

Let us suppose that Jones, solicitor, Lincoln's Inn, wishes to back Formosa for the Derby. Jones has an idea that he knows a thing or two—which he does not—about a horse, and, looking in his newspaper, finds that the odds against the above mare are, let us say, ten to one. All he does, is to send his money to some respectable well-known bookmaker, and the latter returns him a ticket, whereby he promises to pay Jones the given odds, plus the money paid to him, the bookmaker, in the event of Formosa winning. Let us say that Jones makes up his mind to risk "a fiver" on the mare's winning; he sends Thompson, the bookmaker, a five-pound note, and gets in return a ticket, by which, in the event of Formosa winning the Derby, Thompson pledges himself to pay Jones fifty-five pounds; that is, fifty pounds as the odds against the mare (ten to one), and the five pounds paid back again. If Jones should be fortunate, and Formosa should win, the money is safe to be paid the day after the race. Thompson is a respectable bookmaker, and his ticket is as good as gold. If, on the other hand, the mare lose, then Jones sees no more of his five pounds, which become the bookmaker's lawful winnings.

The uninitiated will ask how it is that the new calling can be a profitable calling, if, as a rule—and, by the way, it *is* the rule—the bookmakers lay the odds against the horses. Thus, in the example just given, the bookmaker has a chance of winning five pounds, but he has also a chance of losing fifty; and as the odds are often a hundred, a hundred and fifty, even two hundred, to one against a horse, the bookmaker must risk that amount for the chance of winning a single sovereign. A few minutes' consideration will demonstrate how, in the long run—nay, even on almost every event—the bookmaker, who makes betting his trade, must win, and the outside public—though a few here and there may win—must lose.

Let us suppose that for a certain race there are twenty horses to run. Of these, we will suppose that the favourite, or the horse believed most likely to win, stands in the betting at five to one—that is, five to one is bet that such horse does not win the race. Let us further suppose that the second horse is quoted at ten to one against him, the third at fifteen or twenty to one, and so on down to what are called the "outsiders"—the horses

supposed to have very little chance of winning—some of which are quoted at sixty, seventy, or even eighty and a hundred, to one, against them. It is very certain that of all these horses only one can win, and if the bookmaker confined himself to laying single bets against all the twenty, he would make but a small profit if one of the favourites won, and would be a heavy loser if any other horse came in first; in other words, if he took the odds of one pound each in favour of the twenty horses, and any horse against which he had bet more than twenty to one lost the race, he would be a loser. On the one hand he would have received twenty pounds, but on the other he would have to pay the odds he had laid against the horse that had won. If, however, the favourite, against which he had only bet five to one was the winner, he would have received twenty pounds, and would only have to pay away six—namely, the five he had bet, plus the one he had been paid by the backer of the horse. If, again, the horse against which he had bet ten to one were the winner, he would, out of the twenty pounds he had received, have to pay away eleven—the ten pounds odds and the one pound received from the backer—and thus he would be a winner of nine pounds, and so on throughout the list of horses.

To a certain extent this theory is true. So much so, that when a favourite horse for a race wins, the event is called "a good thing for the bookmakers;" and when a horse low down in the betting wins, the race is said to be good for the "backers"—that is, for the outside public. But, the bookmaker makes betting his profession, and the very term of "making a book" means to have such a combination of bets in his book that he not only *cannot lose*, but, that no matter what horse comes in first, he *must win*. Thus, on all the great races he commences betting a year, or perhaps eighteen months before the event. Whenever he sees that he is in danger of losing a heavy sum in the event of any particular horse winning, he either stops betting altogether, and says he "is full" on that horse, or more generally takes the bets offered him by the general public, and "hedges" them at some other place of betting resource, with his brother bookmakers, or with other betting men.

What is meant by the term "to hedge" a bet? Let us suppose that Thompson, the bookmaker, finds that if Blue Gown wins the Derby, he will be the loser of a thousand pounds; that is, so many of the public have taken the odds of five to one against the horse, that even calculating what he will pocket by other horses losing, he will still be a loser to the above amount should the favourite win. Still the public go on backing the horse, and thereby increasing his risk. If he were to shut up his book, and refuse to bet against the horse any more, he would lose many clients, for members of the new calling are supposed to be always ready to take the odds to any amount from the backers of horses. So Thompson goes to

some brother bookmaker, or to some "turf swell," and *backs* the horse to the amount of a thousand pounds; thus so arranging his book, that what he will lose to the public if the horse win, he will win from others if the horse loses. This is called "hedging," or squaring the account in the bookmaker's betting-book. The transaction is perfectly lawful. The public want to bet in favour of the horse, but there are other betting-men whose book it will suit to bet against it. The bookmaker accommodates both parties, and transacts his own business in the way most profitable to himself.

Like all other men, the members of the new calling are liable to make mistakes. It not unfrequently happens that they "stand to win" too heavily upon one or two horses, so that, to use their own expression, "the pot boils over." At last year's Derby, many of the bookmakers were sold when Hermit won. This season the dead heat run at Newmarket by Formosa and Moslem was most unexpected. Formosa was the favourite, and the new calling looked upon the race as won before it was run. Just before the horses started the betting was seven to two against Formosa, and a hundred to eight, or twelve-and-a-half to one against Moslem; and yet the two ran a dead heat, consequently the stakes and bets had to be divided.

There are two rules which no respectable bookmaker ever breaks. The first is, never to risk a single shilling over and above what he can pay down in hard cash twenty-four hours after the race; the second is, never to stand too much upon any one horse without hedging his money.

It will hardly be believed what perfect confidence betting-men among the general public—and in these days, particularly among what may be termed the lower middle classes, to bet is the rule, and not to bet the exception—will repose in bookmakers whom they know. It is an every-day occurrence for a small tradesman to put "a fiver" or a "tenner" into the hands of a bookmaker on the eve of a great race, and to beg the bookmaker to lay it out for him to the best advantage; not even telling him what horses to back. The bookmaker generally returns the money with a fair profit next day; deducting his own commission of a shilling in the pound.

The "welcher" bears towards the respectable bookmaker much the same relative position that the keepers of silver hells in former days used to hold towards those who ruled at Crockford's and the great gaming houses. The "welcher," properly so called, takes the money offered him to back a horse; but when he has taken money enough from his dupes, departs from the scene of his labours, and trusts to his luck, a dyed wig, or a pair of false whiskers, not to be recognised. His plan of operations generally is to begin as a betting agent, or bookmaker as he calls himself, in the West-end of London. There he gets round him a knot of clients, whom he meets in some public-house, the master of which encourages him; for his pre-

sence attracts several other persons to meet him on business, and business is thirsty work. When established in this way, he generally makes gentlemen's servants and small tradesmen his victims. For a time, perhaps, he works "on the square," not being trusted with enough to make it worth his while to be dishonest. He begins with taking shilling and halferown bets, rarely going as high as a sovereign on any horse. His chief game is to get his clients to bet on what are called double events, which, though tempting in the odds they offer, are almost a certainty in favour of those who bet against them, which bookmakers, whether honest men or "welchers," invariably do.

A "double event" bet is to back two named horses to win two named races. As the odds against this are necessarily high, the temptation to the outside public is proportionably great. The way to calculate a double event bet is to multiply the odds against the one horse by the odds against the other. Thus, let us suppose that the betting against Blue Gown winning the Derby is ten to one, and the odds against Lady Elizabeth winning the Oaks are twelve to one. Ten times twelve make a hundred and twenty; therefore the odds against the two horses winning the double event are a hundred and twenty to one. Let us suppose that the first event comes off right, and that Blue Gown does win the Derby; it follows as a matter of course that the whole bet then depends upon Lady Elizabeth's winning the Oaks; and thus the total amount of the odds, a hundred and twenty to one, is laid against her. If the bookmaker believed there was any chance whatever of the second event turning against him, he would either hedge his money—which, of course, he has every possible facility of doing—or he would buy the bet from the backer for a comparatively small sum.

From the West-end of London a "welcher" bookmaker generally goes to the far east; and, among the low public-houses of Whitechapel or the Commercial-road, manages to prove to the off-scourings of the Jewish population that there are even keener wits in matters financial than themselves. Another dodge of these rascals is to adopt the names of some well-known and respectable bookmaker, and, by inserting advertisements in the sporting papers, induce backers of the pigeon kind to send their golden eggs to the nests of the hawks. Of course this little game does not last long.

There was a time when "welchers" and such like unmitigated rascals were only to be found in London; but now, thanks to railways and cheap trains, they are to be found in almost every large town in England. Manchester is full of welchers; Liverpool numbers its welchers by the hundred; similarly, there are any number of these ruffians in Leeds, or Birmingham, or Bristol. Nay, in even much smaller towns, such as Cheltenham, Leamington, and Bath. The nature of their frauds, and the intense rascality of their calling, oblige them to be rolling stones. When the metropolis is too

hot for them, they betake themselves to Liverpool, or Leeds; and when those become too hot, they emigrate to Manchester or Birmingham. If prosperous, a welcher will perhaps take a low public-house, which becomes the resort of similar scoundrels; if he do not get on, after two or three years of provincial life, he returns to London, and ends in a police office and a jail.

Among the outside public there is an idea that the whole betting world regulates its financial operations very much by relying on information obtained from training stables, through persons who betray the trust reposed in them, and who divulge secrets respecting this horse beating his stable companion at a trial; that filly breaking down at exercise, or the other colt going wrong in his fetlock. This means of gaining information, however, is altogether a thing of the past. Ask any bookmaker what rule he observes in his betting throughout the year, and he will reply that he "follows the money." He means that the market price of each horse guides him in all his speculations, and that of the quality or qualification of the horses he knows little or nothing. The said "money," or "market price"—the betting odds, in fact—are much more influenced by the owners of the horses wanting to push up or pull down their horses in the betting, than by any capabilities, or want of the same, in the horses themselves. Of course, when the owner of a really good horse thinks that the animal has a good chance to win a certain race, he backs him; but rarely without making his money safe by hedging upon some other horse in the same race. And in the same way, when a horse is considered quite unfit to run, he is generally "scratched" out of the race, or allowed to start merely to make the running for some other horse. It is only when the competing horses are actually at the post, just before starting, that their condition causes any change worth speaking of in the odds; and even then the cautious betters prefer bookmaking upon figures to betting upon the horses. Racing as now conducted is a pure matter of money making, and races might just as well be run by costermongers' donkeys as by the best blood in England, so far as it is conducive to any improvement in the breed of horses, apart from racing purposes.

AN UNOFFICIAL REPORT.

IN a recent number of All the Year Round, the published opinions of certain practical men reporting their impressions of what they saw at Paris, when visiting that city on the occasion of the Great Exhibition, were made the subject of an article. That article, and those reports reviewed in it, reminded me of some professional strictures made by a representative of a very different industry from any of those reported on to the Society of Arts.

One day last season, when the Paris Exhibition was in the fulness of its popularity, and

when excursions for the benefit of all conditions of men were thriving, I crossed from Boulogne to Dover aboard a steamboat crammed from end to end with passengers.

Among that large assembly, was an individual personage who particularly attracted my attention, and whom I continually found myself staring at, with a persistency hardly consistent with the rules of good-breeding, as laid down by the best authorities on general etiquette. I think it must have been a certain incongruousness in the look of this personage which made me stare at him so much. The man and his costume, or "get up," as the slang of the day goes, were so entirely inconsistent and at variance with each other. They told two different tales in unmistakable, though inarticulate, language. Let me try to translate their silent evidence into words.

To begin with, then, so far as his hair and his headdress went, this small personage—for he was short of stature and light in build—was, to all appearance, a Frenchman; his hair being cut exceedingly short, and the cap he wore upon his head being of that peculiar kind which is known in France as a helmet-cap: a headdress now almost confined to omnibus conductors, but which used formerly to be much worn by the guards of diligences and others. He wore, moreover, a short boy's jacket with an upright collar, like a soldier's. This garment was, however, worn open, and was of a dark brown, or invisible green tint, it was difficult to see which. With this jacket the sum of those indications which seemed to point to French origin came to an end. The gentleman's legs, which were somewhat bowed, were unmistakably English; and as to his face, though he was closely shaved, except as to his upper lip (on which there was about a week's growth of hair), it was the most indubitably English face you could desire to see—English in feature, in expression, in colour. As to his social standing, it was evident that he belonged to what is mysteriously called the "working class," and had it been necessary to define his position with nicer accuracy, I think I should have been disposed to attribute to him a connexion with that branch of industry which is carried on in stables and straw yards. Such a guess would not have been very far from the mark, as it afterwards turned out.

It surprised me to see the person whom I have thus attempted to sketch travelling by a boat which was not an excursion boat, and apparently alone. For, he belonged to a class of travellers, who travel for the most part in large numbers, and by excursion trains. Here was another thing to stimulate my curiosity. I ought to mention, by the way, that the question of his nationality had been set at rest by a few words which he had spoken in unmistakable, if not "very choice," English. I was not long in carrying out my determination to get into conversation with this personage. We were standing close together in the forward part of the ship, whither I had gone to smoke, and I

began by asking him abruptly, "if he had been to Paris?"

Heavens, what a burst of eloquence did that singularly common-place question of mine call forth! This little man was a sort of conversation cask waiting to be tapped, and I had tapped him.

"Yes, he had been to Paris. He had had a thirty-shilling excursion ticket, and was coming back with it, and unluckily at Amiens he had run out to look about him a little, thinking there was more time than there was, but the train had gone without him, and he had been compelled to take another ticket and come on, as his holiday time was up, and he was obliged to be back in London. He didn't blame anybody. It was his own mistake, not the Frenchmen's," he said; "catch them making a mistake!"

It was such an extraordinary thing to find an Englishman of the class to which my new acquaintance belonged, ready to acknowledge merit in Frenchmen and French institutions, that I now wished more than ever to draw my gentleman out, and to hear what he had to say.

"Catch them making a mistake," repeated the little man. "I've been among 'em, now, for handy upon a fortnight, excursioning here, there, and everywhere, travelling in their railway trains, riding in their 'busses, dining in their eating-houses, visiting their Louvers, their Goblin Tapestries, their Pally Royals, and what not, and I never saw 'em make a mistake yet. The managing ways of that people, the extent to which they take you in hand—if I may so put it—looking after you from the moment you come—in a manner of speaking—into their custody, till the moment you come out of it again—is something altogether surprising and beautiful. Not that this manner of doing it all for you, and tackling you at every turn, and 'you must go in here,' and 'you mustn't go in there,' and 'you must do this,' and 'you mustn't do that,' is always what you like; but still what I do maintain, is, that if you do what they tell you to do, and don't what they tell you to don't, they see that you get what you go in for, and that you come out right side uppermost at last."

"Then altogether," I said, "you admire their institutions?"

"Admire 'em!" I should think I did! Why, look at 'em in the matter of 'busses alone. There's a good many things in Paris that I don't understand, and don't profess to understand; but I do know something about the working of a 'buss, and anything like the way they manage their 'busses—but there! It's perfection. That's what it is."

"You are engaged in the omnibus business yourself?"

"Yes, sir. I'm a conductor on the Islington and Brompton line. That's what I am. Angel, Oxford-street, Circus, Piccadilly, Sloane-street, Bilers, and Queen's Elm. I'm very close occupied in a general way, but I managed to get a holiday for a fortnight, and, having a pound or

two by me (it was left me in a small legacy, that money was) I thought I'd spend it in taking one of these excursion tickets to Paris and back. The fact is," continued my friend in the helmet-cap, confidentially, "I'd been put upon my metal, a bit. There's a young woman living near the 'Helm,' as nice a young woman as you'd wish to see, and Clarissar Armstrong by name, and it's her conduct that's put my back up, as you may say, and been the cause of my jining this excursion party. 'You've no conversation, George,' she says to me one day. 'There's some people,' she says, 'has a lot to say for themselves, and telling you where they've been, and what they've seen, and all the rest of it. But you don't seem to have nothing to say about anything.' I knew what *she* meant, she was a thinking of young Rackstraw, the greengrocer, that's who she was thinking of. He'd been to Margate for a week, and you'd think he'd been to Jerusalem to hear what he had to say about it, going on as if it was the wonderfulest journey ever made by man. 'I'll soon cut him out,' I think to myself. So the next time I saw Clarissar Armstrong, I remarks, in a easy way, 'I'm agoing to Paris to-morrow, and perhaps I may have some conversation when I come back.' But I don't know that I shall have much to say that she'll care to hear, after all. I haven't noticed much about the ladies' dresses, or the short petticoats, or the bonnets and cloaks in the shop windows, or the likes of them, my whole mind having been bestowed, as was but natural, upon my own subject, namely, the 'busses. And the way them busses was officered, that is to say driven and conducted, and worked generally. There! Per-fec-tion!"

"I should say that one of those 'busses as holds twenty-four inside, and is drawn by three white horses screeching and yelling at the tops of their voices all the way along the road, would make a sensation in Brompton if anything would. Accommodation for twelve up each of the seats inside, and divided into compartments, too, like armchairs, so that you can't get squeezed; and if anybody gets in who's several sizes too large for his seat, it's *him* as must take the consequences of it and not *you*. But it isn't so much the size of them 'busses as would astonish our natives—there being some good big 'uns among the Islington Favourites, and also working from the Oxford-street Circus to the station of the Metropolitan at Portland-road. It isn't so much the size, nor yet the compartments, nor yet the dial-plate again the door, on which they give a stroke for every passenger as enters the 'buss, and which, as tending to show suspicion on the part of the 'buss company of their servants, I cannot approve of—it isn't so much these things, nor yet the way in which the passengers get in and out when the 'buss is at full trot without stopping the vehicle—throwing themselves back'ards when they get out, and for'ards when they get in—it isn't any of these things that would astonish our general 'buss

public so much as the extraordinary way in which order is kept and fair play observed when there's a crowd of people—about five times as many as the 'buss will hold—all congregated together at the place from which it starts, and all wanting to get in at once.

"You'd think there'd be no end to the fighting and scrambling under such circumstances, the strongest battling their way in and the weakest going to the wall. Not a bit of it. There's a little wooden office at the starting place where they give you a number on a piece of card—No. 20, 21, 22, or any other number as the case may be; the earlier you apply the earlier number you get, and the sooner consequently you're sent off. Now, say you get number twenty-one; away you goes with it and presents yourself among the crowd about the door of the 'buss. No chance for you yet. You find that the twentys are not placed yet, perhaps not the nineteens even, nor all the eighteens. You must wait till these are seated. If you were with the strength of a giant to force your way in you'd just be pulled out again before you could seat yourself in the conveyance. You must wait.

"By-and-by the eighteens and the nineteens are disposed of. 'Any more nineteens?' shouts the conductor—'any more nineteens?' There are no more. 'Twentys then,' he sings out, and immediately all the people with twenty tickets get in till the vehicle is full. It drives off, and in due time another takes its place. The conductor asks at the little office what number was on when the last 'buss left, and then takes his place at the door of his own 'buss. 'No. 20' he calls, and in get all the twentys who remained from the last load, one after another. 'Any more twentys?' asks the conductor, and then at last your chance with your twenty-one ticket comes, and you get your place.

"But the systematic ways of the managers, whoever they were, that had the working of those Exhibition omnibusses, didn't end with the starting arrangements. They'd discovered that by working the 'busses on a tramway, instead of along the common paved road, a great saving might be brought about, both in time, in horses' labour, in wear and tear of rolling stock, and in a many other ways; so down went a double set of rails along the whole line of their journey, from the Exhibition as far as the most central point in Paris to which it was possible to bring a tramway without interfering with the ordinary carriage traffic. And here, then, springs up a new difficulty. You require for working any kind of vehicle on a tramway, a different kind of wheel to what is required on an ordinary pavement. You want a wheel with a flange; but then comes the obstacle that the wheel with the flange can't be used *except* on a rail. This was the fix in which the managers found themselves when they began to arrange their plans. What was to be done? Have another 'buss ready with the usual street wheels, and

transfer the passengers into it for the rest of the journey? That would have been one way certainly, but an awkward and clumsy way, and most particularly obnoxious to the passengers themselves, who hate being turned out of one vehicle into another, in a batch, to an extraordinary degree: as any one may observe at a railway junction when it is necessary for the travellers to change their carriages. No, that way wouldn't do, and some other way had to be hit upon.

"It was in the dusk of the evening when I first travelled by one of these Leviathan 'busses, and I couldn't very well see what was going on; but when we came to the beginning of the Paris streets we come to a stop in a large open space, where, as far as I could make out from the window, there was a crowd of workmen with lanterns, who were rolling wheels about—great heaps of which were lying here and there by the way-side—without, as far as I could make out, any particular object. I'd not been occupied long in wondering what was going to happen, when I suddenly felt a great hitch up of the side of the omnibus on which I was a sitting. Then there was a kind of a grinding, or a revolting sound, if I may so speak, and then we were hitched down again with a slight bump. This was followed by a great cracking of whips and screaming of horses, and we were off again and rattling through the Paris streets. Bless you! In that brief space of time they'd changed the wheels with the flanges on them for ordinary street wheels fit for ordinary street traffic.

"You'll understand," the little man added, "that it was only the wheels on one side as had to be changed; the flanges on one side being sufficient to hold the wheels on that side to the rail, and those on the other side being ordinary wheels, running along a sunk tramway.

"But there, sir! I might go on for ever about them French omnibusses, and their arrangements; their correspondence system for getting from one line of 'busses to another line; their plan of putting up a board outside when the conveyance is full, to tell you so; their taking your money almost as soon as you get in, so that there's no temptation to the passenger to stand on the step while waiting for change, as so many people—especially ladies—do with us, forgetting that if the horses move on so much as a single yard they're certain to be thrown on their faces in the road. But what's the use of my going on about all these things? What I mean to do is to try and imitate, as far as my humble powers go, what I've seen, and to try, moreover, to persuade the governors to go in for some of those improvements which I've been taking the liberty of setting before you, and the sight of which has made me feel so uncommon small when I've thought of all the scrambling, and shoving, and the scowling, and the refusing to close up, and all the rest of the muddle, which I've witnessed, first and last, in the course of all

the many journeys I've made from the Angel to the Queen's Helm."

It was by way of taking a first step towards the organising of a great omnibus reform that he had provided himself with the French omnibus conductor's cap and jacket which had already been described as forming part of his costume.

"He thought it might lead to something," he said.

POLLY'S ONE OFFER.

IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"I'm not wishing to complain, but it is a hard life to be left a widow with children, and nothing certain to bring 'em up to. I hope my girls will never marry to be left as I was. Poor James didn't expect it, and I'm sure I looked for something very different, or I should have thought twice before I'd plunged into such troubles. A family comes before you've time to turn round, and nobody would believe the wear and tear of boys but them that have them—not that girls are not a terrible anxiety too. And it isn't so much when they're little—when they're little, after you've put 'em to bed, you know they are safe and out of mischief, and there is peace in the house; it is when they're getting up your real troubles begin. Jack is no sooner off my hands than there's Polly to think of—poor little Polly that was seventeen yesterday, and was only a baby when her father died—there she sits!" and as she concluded, Mrs. Curtis raised her right hand and let it drop heavily into her lap again, and groaned as if Polly were engaged in the commission of some moral enormity past expression in words.

The stout old lady, Mrs. Sanders, to whom the widow was pouring out her injuries at the hands of Providence, groaned responsive, and looked at Polly with a slow shake of the head, which seemed to imply that her case was bad as bad could be. "Thank the Lord, I never had no children," said she, with solemn gratitude; "They'd have killed me outright. Sanders is quite enough by himself! Nobody knows, but them that has 'em to put up with, the cu'rous ways of men. Take warning by your mother and me, Polly, and never you go to marry, to be dragged to death with children, and made a slave of by a husband as won't let you have a sixpence in your pocket, and him that extravagant with his clubs and his committees, and his nonsense, that I should never be surprised if we was in the Gazette next week."

Polly's rosy little dewy face laughed all over, and she cried gaily: "That I won't, Mrs. Sanders; you and my mother are a perfect antidote to the romance of family affection. If ever I feel tempted to fall in love, I'll remember you, and be saved the folly."

"Folly, indeed, and worse than folly!" ejaculated Mrs. Curtis, and stared wearily into the fire.

She deserved to be weary. Mrs. Sanders had come in at three o'clock out of the November fog; it was now five and quite dusk in the little drawing-room, and not one cheerful word had either attempted to say to the other. Polly would have run out of hearing of their monotony long since, but there was no other fire in the house to escape to except Biddy's in the kitchen, which was not "redd up" till tea-time; so she had fallen back on the patience of a contented heart and sweet temper, and her precious faculty of mental abstraction, which she had cultivated to a high degree in her mother's society. And a very wise measure too, for though Mrs. Curtis bemoaned her widowed lot without ceasing, Polly well knew that her griefs were fictitious now, and that she enjoyed nothing so much as a good uninterrupted wail with vulgar old Mrs. Sanders. In fact, all her real cares had been taken off her shoulders by other people as fast as they arose, and on this particular November afternoon, she was so much at a loss for a grievance that she could only recur to the event of seventeen years ago, when a beneficent providence had relieved her of a husband of whom, during his lifetime, she had never spoken save as a "trying" man. Jane, the eldest daughter, and the eldest of the family, had assumed its headship immediately on her father's vacating it, and had by her teaching of music and singing, earned its daily bread since she was as young as Polly was now. Uncle Walter had taken James and Tom from the grammar school successively, after helping to maintain them there until they were of an age to go into training for physic and divinity, the expense of which training he bore with the assistance of Uncle Everard; then Uncle Everard's wife, who had no girls of her own, had adopted Lily, the second daughter, from quite a little thing, and had brought her up with every luxury and indulgence of a rich man's child; and, lastly, Uncle Robert, who was a civil engineer, had just taken Jack into his house and office, with the understanding that he would provide for him entirely if his conduct was satisfactory. The worst of this was, as Jane said, that they could never be one house again; but her mother, who had no sentiment, protested that it did not matter, if they were in the way of promotion in the world: large families must scatter, and all she wanted was to see them get on, and be independent, and not subject to poverty as she had been. Jane acquiesced in the necessity for the boys, and only hoped they might keep little Polly at home, for little Polly was her pet, her heart's darling and delight from the day of her birth until now that she was a sweet, blooming, blushing little woman.

But little Polly, for a wonder, had a fancy for getting away from the dull suburban cottage whence the boys were now all gone for good, and had lately proclaimed her own intention to go out as a governess, and not continue a burden on Jane.

"A burden!" echoed Jane: "Why, Polly, you are my only joy."

She said sending poor Walter's music back was making much ado about nothing; musical people always gave each other music, and she would have liked to see it herself if it was new. She never did see it, however; for Walter took his rebuff seriously, and called no more on Mrs. Curtis and her daughters. It was after this incident that Polly mooted her longing for liberty, and though nobody suggested any connexion between the two circumstances, they were connected. If young men had been all roaring lions and fiery dragons, Mrs. Curtis could not have more obstinately shut her doors against them, or preached severer warnings of the danger of them to Polly in private. Two results ensued. Polly learnt to think of young men as vanity and vexation, and of home as dull and cheerless; and then the idea occurred to her that if other girls worked, why should not she? "Why should not she?" echoed her mother, and after a very little discussion her idea matured into a positive wish and desire to go out as a governess. Jane resisted until she saw that resistance was fruitless; then she gave in; and while Polly began to prepare her modest wardrobe for a start in the world, Jane inquired amongst the parents of her pupils for a suitable place where she might earn her first experiences mildly.

"I must have my evenings to improve myself, and I don't want to be treated as 'one of the family'—I'd rather not," Polly announced, full of her coming independence, and contemptuous of all half measures by which the change might be made easy to her. Jane bade her not expect to have everything just as she liked in other people's houses; she must prepare to conform to their ways, and not expect them to conform one tittle to hers.

But Polly would take no discouragement; she was quite gay and valiant in her fashion of looking the world in the face, and she felt glad, absolutely glad, as if some great good fortune had befallen her, when, just before Christmas, after a long negotiation on paper and a personal interview, she was engaged as governess to the three children of Captain and Mrs. Stapylton, at a salary of twenty pounds the first year, rising five the second and third. The stipulation for evening leisure was agreed to, and Jane and everybody else allowed that, since she *would* go out, it was as nice a beginning as she could have. Captain Stapylton was a military officer on half-pay, and warden of the royal forest of Lanswood; his wife was of a Norminster family, and if Polly stayed with them three years (not less than three years), and used her opportunities as she ought, she would then be equal to a higher situation and a handsome salary—so, at least, reasoned Miss Mill, who, having been a governess and about in the world nearly half a century, of course knew all about it; and little Polly, listening to her delighted, felt her responsibility and assumed grave airs of being about a hundred years old, which tickled the fancy of some foolish people so excessively that they were more than ever inclined to treat her with

affectionate disrespect. Jane said to Miss Mill that she was not cut out for a governess, and Miss Mill replied that anybody could see that; but Polly had a lofty sense of her own dignity; and not the remotest idea of the temptation she was to silly kind folks; and thus she started on her career with clear-eyed, happy-hearted confidence, brave and safe as Una with the lion, all the aim of her life being personal independence and ability to save Jane and help her mother.

CHAPTER II.

POLLY CURTIS was blessed in a dear school friend, three months her elder in experience of the world, with whom she kept up a brisk correspondence, nobody but themselves being able to imagine what they found to say in their long and frequent letters. To Margaret Livingstone, with all appropriate seriousness, she had confided every step in her progress towards liberty, and immediately her engagement with Mrs. Stapylton was concluded, she wrote off to her a solemn statement of its conditions, winding up with the expression of a hope that she might be strengthened to do her duty in the station of life to which it had pleased providence to call her, and a brief moral essay thereupon:

"You know, dear Maggie, I am not like you—a bird of the air, a lily of the field, created neither to toil nor spin—I am a brown working bee, and, thank God, I don't care for pomps and vanities. Rich girls can afford to dream of love and lovers, but I have pruned the wings of my fancy, for they are as far from me as the mountains in the moon. All my ambition is to be a good governess, and if I can ever work myself up to a salary of a hundred a year, I shall be the proudest and happiest of women. Don't talk to me of marrying; it is not in my way; my mother never lets a day pass without warning me of its perils and disappointments. She prevented Jane marrying, and she would prevent me, if I wished it ever so; but I shall be safe from temptation in my schoolroom at the Warden House. If Lanswood is only eight miles from your home, could you not ride over and see me some day when the days are longer? I am busy getting my things ready, and I go the first week in February. There is something inspiring in the thought that henceforth I shall be my own mistress, winning the bread I eat, and depending on no one. But I'll confess it to you (I would not for the world confess it to Jane) that now and then suddenly, when I think of it, my heart gives a spasm as if it were going to turn coward; but my head is not afraid, not a bit. We must make the most of our time in writing before I go, for I do not expect to have very much leisure when teaching begins. You will often think of me, dear Maggie, I know; but don't be sorry and pitiful over me. I am a tough little subject, and is not the back made for the burden? Besides, it is the will of God, &c., &c., &c."

At this point of Polly's letter, Maggie, who was a big-boned tall creature, with a great

tender heart, broke down and began to cry. She could not bear to think of the pretty clever little darling she loved and worshipped so having to *work*, for work and self-dependence were unintelligible ideas to Maggie's indolent dreamy temper. She could not understand her dear Polly slaving like the teachers she had known; it seemed like setting a lark to plough. Boisterously in on her tears broke Bob, her brother, the man of the house, and heard all her complaint, and laughed at it, and then, to comfort her, suggested that Polly should be invited for a week to Blackthorn Grange before she went to Lanswood.

"Would you like her to come, Bob?" Maggie inquired, with eager wistfulness, as if a thought had sprung up in her mind full grown.

"Yes, if she is pretty," said Bob, coolly.

"She is as pretty as pretty can be. But perhaps mother won't; she could not endure Laura's friend," sighed Maggie, and desponded again. She was, however, the youngest daughter of three, and, being fresh from school, some indulgence was due to her; and when her grief and its reason why were explained, Mrs. Livingstone consented to Polly's being asked for a week—not for longer—until she saw for herself what sort of a little body she was. Maggie wrote in exuberant joy and haste, putting the invitation into the most cordial glad words, and making everything (with Bob's assistance) so smooth and easy on the way to the Grange and forward to the Warden House afterwards, that there was no room for doubt or discussion, only for a plain Yes or No. Jane obtained that it should be Yes, and Polly despatched the reply, in which her smiles and dimples and delight were soberly reflected, as became a young woman about to begin the world on her own account. Bob was permitted to read this letter of Polly's, as a reward for his goodness; but by the time it came, it is sad to record that he was growing rather tired of her praises, which Maggie sang in the ears of the household all day.

"Plague take your Polly Curtis; you can talk of nothing else," cried Laura, whose friend had proved a failure, and this on the very morning of the day when Polly was to arrive; and Fanny, the other sister, who was very good natured as a general thing, went so far as to add that she should not be sorry when Maggie's "governess friend" had been and gone; she was not partial to governesses.

And about half-past four in the soft grey January twilight Polly came. Mrs. Livingstone, mindful of all courtesies, all hospitalities, met her in the porch, and brought her in with a kiss, and Laura and Fanny were very polite, notwithstanding their previous bit of temper; and Maggie, after turning her round ecstatically, and looking at her by fire-light and window-light, declared that she was just like herself, and her own dear darling little mite of a Polly, and what a horrid shame it was to make her a stupid old cross-patch of a governess!

"Maggie!" interposed her mother, with a world of rebuke in her voice.

"Polly does not care what I say, does she?" murmured Maggie, turning her round affectionately and peeping under her bonnet—girls wore cottage-bonnets in those days, which were like eaves over their modest faces.

"I like it," said Polly, and glanced round at the assembly with ineffable patronage and self-possession. She felt inexpressibly important; was she not here on an independent visit, previous to entering on an independent career of praiseworthy labour?

"Oh, you wee bit solemn goosey, come upstairs!" cried Maggie, and bore her off, dignity and all, to the room they were to share; and the mother and sisters, left behind, laughed gently and said there was something very odd about the little creature, but she seemed nice—not much like a governess, however.

Polly's box had been carried up-stairs before her, and Maggie watched the opening of it with much interest and curiosity.

"I want you to look your very bonniest," said she. "My mother takes the queerest fancies for and against people, and I want her to take a fancy to you. She could not bear Laura's friend, Maria Spinks, and she won't have her here again. She took to you at first sight from the way she kissed you—I know she did, and I'm so glad."

"I am pleased, too—I like to be liked," said Polly. "She is a very grand old lady, Maggie, you never told me."

"Bob is like her—the only one of us that is—he hasn't come home yet; he is out with the hounds to-day—the meet was at Ellerston Gap this morning, and, here is your old pink frock; put it on, Polly; you can't help looking bonnie in your pink."

"Must I? It was my last summer's best. It is too smart a colour for me, now that I am a governess, but Jane said I might wear it out of evenings in the school-room. I have a new brown French merino for Sundays, and this old violet I travelled in for every day; and Jane gave me a new white muslin—not that there is any chance of my wanting such a thing, but she would insist on my having it—and white satin ribbon. I can wear all white, you know. Do you think it is prettily made, Maggie?"

"Oh, you sweet little witch, it's beautiful, and you'll be a fairy in it! You shall wear it to-night, and everybody shall fall in love with you!" cried Maggie. But Polly with intense decision folded it up, and said that, indeed, she was not going to make a show of herself, not even to please her stupid old jewel of a Maggie.

"You never had any sense of the fitness of things, you precious old dear," said she. "Picture me in white muslin and all the rest of you in thick dresses—this is only for a party or a concert, you know. I had better put on my new brown merino."

"I won't have you in brown—brown has nothing to do with my wee little rosy daisy,"

cried Maggie, and grown suddenly impatient of Polly's grave airs, she seized her, shook her, kissed her, never deranging her dignity however, a hairsbreadth. Polly tolerated her caressing patiently and sweetly, it was Maggie's way; and when there was nobody to see, she did not object to her petting and spoiling—it pleased Maggie and did not hurt her—so she said with her admirable coolness, which Maggie was much too humble and adoring ever to resent.

Finally, Polly was arrayed in the pink dress with tucker and cuffs of fine lace, and her glossy brown hair tied round with a pink ribbon—as dainty a little lady as had ever stepped down the stairs of Blackthorn Grange in all the three hundred years since it had been built. It was a farm-house which the Livingstones had tenanted for three generations, but the old beauty of it, with its walled garden and mossy orchard, was still cherished, and the Livingstones, by virtue of descent, connexion, and a small entailed estate in the family, ranked with the minor gentry and the clergy of their neighbourhood. Polly, as she tripped along the hall, said she liked the house, and if she was Maggie, she should feel quite romantic, and proud of living in such a fine ancient place.

The parlour door was ajar, and Mrs. Livingstone overheard the cheerful young voice expressing a sentiment that pleased her. She held out a hand to welcome Polly again, and said: "So I thought when I arrived here after my marriage."

"The window on the stairs was a picture as we went up, with the moon rising and the red bars of sunset behind the great bare trees in the garden; what time of the year did you come?" said Polly, whose sympathy was very quick.

"It was a September evening and the sky all aglow with scarlet and fire. I remember resting in that window-seat, my first rest in my new home; there was a fir-tree standing then that is gone now; but you are cold, child; sit here on this low stool and get warmed. Maggie, you should not have kept her up-stairs so long to starve her."

"I never felt the cold until I saw the fire," said Polly, pleasantly, and deposited herself in the corner between Mrs. Livingstone and the fender, on the low stool as she was bidden, and then looked calmly about at the room and its occupants.

It was a large room, low, and with the beams of the ceiling visible; the wide window was crimson curtained, and all the furniture was old and substantial, but there was neither decoration nor taste anywhere. The three sisters had not an ounce of taste amongst them, and when lilacs, gillyflowers, and roses were over in the garden, the big china bowl on the centre table stood empty, or served as a receptacle for waifs and strays escaped from careless hands and pockets. The sisters were in perfect accord with their unadorned surroundings; large, honest, healthy young women with a good

and well-grounded opinion of themselves, and Maggie with just glimmering enough of sentiment besides to feel the charm of a friend like Polly, who was instinct with life and spirit, and a perfect contrast to herself. The inclination to protect and caress her little guest had evidently taken hold of Mrs. Livingstone as it did of so many other warm-hearted people; for twice or thrice, as Polly sat toasting in her corner, the house-mother took up one of her small hands and chafed it gently between her own, and Polly looked at her as she never had occasion to look at her own poor shrewish mother at home. Polly loved her mother, but mothers lose a great deal who keep their children at a distance: so thought Polly thus introduced into the bosom of a family, all the members of which were fond of each other and not afraid to show it.

They were talking rather noisily and several of them together, when there was a bustle in the hall, a loud voice, a loud step, and then the opening of the door, at which appeared a tall young man in a scarlet coat and velvet cap who asked: "Well, hasn't she come?" not seeing the little figure in the corner half hidden by his mother.

"Yes!" cried Maggie, "she is here; stand up, Polly, and say how d'ye do to Bob!"

Polly rose with extreme circumspection and executed the frigid manoeuvre that she had been laboriously instructed to perform when a gentleman was introduced, only she blushed with it, which was not in the dancing-school order. Bob brought his spurred heels together with a click, and imitated the bow preposterously—the blush was beyond him; but Polly's eyes were downcast, and she was spared the anguish of seeing her grave airs made fun of by this disrespectful person, whose mother admonished him to go away and make haste for dinner, it was late. Bob obeyed, with a comical grimace at Maggie, which she replied to with a half laugh—rude, very rude; but there was something about that queer little Polly, turned precisian, that provoked it, and her utter unconsciousness of the effect she produced increased the humour of the joke.

When Bob came back to the parlour the servant was just announcing dinner, and the young man stepped briskly across the room to Polly, and bending unnecessarily low, offered her his arm with an exaggerated affectation of courtesy that wakened Maggie's alarm and made her long to box his ears. But Polly took it with beautiful serenity, and kept step with him composedly until he placed her by himself at table in the full light of the lamp—the loveliest little thing that had ever sat there since he was master, as he thought, glancing down at her with more serious approval. And it was capital to hear her talk. How he had expected to hear her talk goodness knows; but when she used the right words about a fox-hunt, and asked if they had had a good run to-day, and if he was in at the death, and who won the brush, it is impossible to say whether he was most

amazed or enchanted by her wonderful cleverness—all the more wonderful in a creature so bewilderingly pretty and sweet.

She was new too, quite new. Bob had never seen anybody in the least like her. Girls usually pretended to be shy of him, partly from liking and a desire to attract, and partly from the reputation he had of being wild. Polly knew nothing about wildness. His mother and sisters adored him, the maid-servant smiled when he spoke, the dogs lay at his feet and were happy. He was no beauty, but he was a fine manly young fellow, and very popular in his neighbourhood. To Polly he seemed a rather mature person—he was not far from thirty—and after the first blush, the sense of her highly responsible position came to her aid, and re-established her in perfect calm. It was delicious to Bob to be looked innocently in the face by those soft brown eyes, and talked to without any sham airs and graces. A strain of jocular compliment was all that was usually required of him when he had a pretty girl at his elbow; but Polly was as good as a lesson in manners; she did not expect compliments, and he had the wit to see she would not like them. So he adopted her tone of conversation with seriousness, only relapsing into his original frame of mind twice or thrice for a moment, when her assumption of sageness and duty became too much for his sense of the ridiculous.

The formality and propriety of the party held out through dinner, but the instant Maggie got Polly into the parlour, she seized her by the waist and whirled her round in a waltz. "Don't, Maggie," said Polly, but entered into the spirit of it all the same; and more, when Fanny good-naturedly opened the piano, and offered to play for them, the music brought Bob, who composed himself in his arm-chair, and looked on, until Maggie popped her partner down breathless on the sofa and herself by her.

"That will do, what a dust you have made," said he, and Polly started and felt abashed at her inappropriate behaviour. Yet a few minutes after Bob was making a dust himself, and learning the new step of Polly, which he knew perfectly; if his sisters had not worshipped him with fear, they would have told her that he was only doing it to tease her and amuse himself. He managed to be most skilfully stupid; a dozen times, at least, did Polly "put his feet in the way of it," as she said, and a dozen times did he fail to do it correctly. He suggested that perhaps if he did it with her, he might succeed in keeping time, but Polly said "No, let him try it with Maggie, she was a better height for him." He, however, did it worst of all with Maggie, and Polly for the honour of

her teaching was prevailed on to take him in hand herself.

"But I don't expect you will be able to do it," said she, despairingly.

Fanny at the piano glanced over her shoulder laughing, and even Mrs. Livingstone watched with an amused smile while Bob redeemed his character. He knew how to hold his partner at all events, Polly thought at the start, and it was astonishing how fast he improved with her to keep him in step. In fact, he caught it up directly, though when Polly wished him to try it again with Maggie, his awkwardness was, if possible, more conspicuous than before.

"This is very discouraging; of course I don't mean that you can help it," said Polly, in the most admirable tone of a patient teacher dealing with a dull but willing pupil.

The inconvenient Maggie burst out in a long suppressed merry peal of laughter: "O, you dear little comical darling, Bob is only making fun; he can dance as well as any of us!" cried she.

Polly gazed up for half a minute with blank dismay at Bob, then joined in the laugh against herself, and said: "If you are that sort of person, I shall take care how I give you a dancing-lesson again!"

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